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APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
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TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN
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FINANCIAL SERVICES AND
GENERAL GOVERNMENT

ASSISTANT WHIP

Daniel R. Elliott III
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Surface Transportation Board
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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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Dear Chairman Elliott:

I write to express my views about the upcoming hearing by the Surface Transportation Board to review the regulatory framework governing the operation of freight railroads. While I recognize that hearings are an important and essential way for the Board to keep informed about issues involving the industry, I am concerned that ensuing actions resulting in increased burdensome regulations will restrict rail earnings, threaten private investment, and result in job losses.

Freight railroads are a vital industry in Florida and across the nation, with an especially large presence in Florida. There are more than a dozen freight railroads operating in the state of Florida, including CSX and Florida East Coast Railway, on nearly 2,900 miles of track. Freight rail companies employ more than 5,500 Floridians with average wages and benefits of \$94,000. Their impact on the economy in our state is tremendous and the minerals and products they carry to and from our state are the lifeblood of the American economy - phosphate rock for agricultural fertilizer; stone, gravel and sand for roads and construction; chemicals used in manufacturing; and, food for our nation's dinner tables. The industries that freight railroads serve in Florida depend on them for reliable, world-leading infrastructure that allows the safe and efficient movement of their goods to their respective customers.

As we slowly work our way out of our economic decline, it is imperative that our nation and our state implement policies that encourage private capital spending and much needed job creation. North American freight railroads have announced plans to invest more than \$12 billion in 2011 in enhancing and maintaining their infrastructure. As you well know, \$1 billion spent on rail infrastructure supports 20,000 jobs. Under the current, reasonable regulatory environment, America's freight railroads are creating new jobs and enhancing their infrastructure in Florida and throughout the nation.

I value the role of freight rail in reviving our economy and would oppose any changes to the current regulatory environment that will inhibit freight railroads ability to continue investing billions of dollars to enhance and modernize the nation's rail system. This keeps our communities safe, enhances our infrastructure and connectivity, maintains our ability to compete, and creates jobs for Floridians. I urge you to keep these key concerns in mind as you hold a hearing to review the economic regulations under which freight railroads currently operate.

Sincerely,

Mario Diaz-Balart

Member of Congress

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